

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2132

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 10544

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, RP

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS

REF: MANILA 10108

1. RELEASE OF DETAINEES. ON JULY 7, 157 OF THE 500 ADDITIONAL PRISONERS ORDERED SET FREE BY PRESIDENT MARCOS JUNE 29 (SEE REFTEL) WERE FORMALLY RELEASED IN CAMP CRAME CEREMONY OPEN TO PRESS AND TV. MEDIA PROVIDED AMPLE COVERAGE OF DEFENSE UNDER-SECRETARY JOSE CRISOL (CHIEF OF DETAINEE AFFAIRS) AND HIGH-RANKING MILITARY OFFICER SHAKING HANDS WITH DETAINEES AND WISHING THEM GOOD LUCK. UNIDENTIFIED PC OFFICER WHO WAS INTERVIEWED ON TV CHARACTERIZED THOSE RELEASED AS "COMMON CRIMINALS" AND SAID MOST WILL STILL FACE CHARGES IN CIVIL COURTS.

2. RAMOS INTERVIEW. PC CHIEF FIDEL RAMOS, INTERVIEWED BY AP FOLLOWING RELEASE CEREMONY, DENIED TORTURE CONSTITUTES PATTERN TO EXTRACT INFORMATION FROM PRISONERS. RAMOS EMPHASIZED THAT ANYONE RESPONSIBLE FOR TORTURING A PRISONER IS CRIMINALLY LIABLE UNDER PHILIPPINE LAW AS WELL AS MILITARY REGULATIONS. HE SAID AMONG THOSE DETAINED FOR ABUSE OF AUTHORITY WERE TWO FULL COLONELS. RAMOS ADDED, "WE HAVE CHARGED SEVERAL OTHER OFFICERS CRIMINALLY, AND MOST OF THEM HAVE BEEN SEPARATED." ACCORDING TO AP, SPOKESMAN FOR GENERAL RAMOS, CONFIDENTIAL

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COL. REYNALDO SAN GABRIEL, LATER SAID TWO COLONELS HAD BEEN SEPARATED FROM SERVICE AFTER BEING FOUND GUILTY OF ABUSES. HE IDENTIFIED ONE OF THESE AS "COLONEL DUMPIT." AP NOTED THAT LAWYERS INVOLVED IN HANDLING TORTURE CASES SAID THEY HAVE NEVER HEARD THIS NAME.

3. HERRERA CASE. COURT-MARTIAL PROCEEDING AGAINST TWO

OFFICERS ACCUSED OF TORTURING MRS. TRINIDAD HERRERA RESUMED JULY 6-8. MRS. HERRERA DESCRIBED HOW SHE WAS TORTURED AND WAS CROSS-EXAMINED BY CIVILIAN DEFENSE COUNSEL ANTONIO CORONEL. PRESS GAVE PROMINENT PLAY TO TESTIMONY SHE WAS PREVIOUSLY ARRESTED FOUR TIMES FOR PARTICIPATION IN ILLEGAL DEMONSTRATIONS AND TO CORONEL'S CONTENTION SHE PURPOSELY REPORTED TORTURE IN ORDER TO GENERATE PUBLICITY AND OBTAIN HER RELEASE SO THAT SHE COULD RUN FOR RE-ELECTION TO ZOTO PRESIDENCY. PRESS ALSO REPORTED CORONEL "ELICITED ADMISSION" FROM MRS. HERRERA THAT CHARGE AGAINST LT PRUDENCIO REGIS, JR. WAS BASED ON RECOGNIZING HIM AS OFFICER WHO THREW EMPTY PACK OF CIGARETTES AT HER. EVENING EXPRESS NOTED JULY 7 THAT "SO INTENSE WAS THE GRILLING CONDUCTED BY CORONEL THAT ON CERTAIN OCCASIONS THE WOMAN BROKE DOWN INTO TEARS..."

4. COMMENT: AMRSP DETAINEES COMMITTEE SOURCE TOLD EMBOFF JULY 6 THAT OF DETAINEES RELEASED SO FAR, ONLY FOUR ARE "POLITICAL." ALL ARE FORMER ZOTO OFFICIALS. GENERAL RAMOS' INTERVIEW WITH AP IS PART OF CONTINUING CAMPAIGN EMPHASIZING REGIME'S POSITIVE EFFORT IN HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD. INTERESTINGLY, AMRSP SOURCE HAD HEARD REPORT OF TRANSFER OF SEVERAL OFFICERS DETAINEES COMMITTEE CLAIMS ENGAGED IN TORTURE. MOST PROMINENT SO FAR IS COLONEL AURE WHO ALLEGEDLY INVOLVED IN PURIFICACION PEDRO CASE. HERRERA CASE HAS BEEN FRONT PAGED IN GUIDED PRESS, CONFIDENTIAL

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BUT TENOR OF REPORTING, WHICH AMRSP SOURCES CLAIM COMPORTS WITH MOOD IN COURT, IS THAT IT IS MRS. HERRERA WHO IS ON TRIAL, NOT HER ALLEGED TORTURERS. STULL

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